

BONDS: more rip-offs

EATS has discovered at least two real estate agents in our catchment area making dodgy and possibly illegal bond claims. Both agencies belong to well known franchises and should know better.

One of these agents sends out a standard letter about ending the tenancy, including details of the amount of rent due, how to return keys and that a final inspection will be arranged at the end of the tenancy. They also invite the tenant to fill in, sign and return an enclosed Bond Claim Form. There would be no legitimate reason for an agent to invite a tenant to fill in a bond claim before they had determined if any money was to be deducted!

Another agent from an unrelated chain advises tenants not to bother about bond claim forms, that they, the agent, will just file the claim online and `save the tenant the trouble`.

A bond is a tenant's money, held by the Rental Bond Board. A Bond Claim Form should be signed by both parties when they agree about the return of the bond. Alternatively, either the tenant or landlord can lodge their own claim, but never with the `amount owing` box blank.

The layout of the form can cause confusion. The form says that if the "amount owing" box is left blank, the full bond will be refunded to the tenant. Unfortunately, a blank box can be filled in by an unscrupulous agent or landlord.